



# Buzzwords ...

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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Conference is not too many weeks away now, and thanks to the considerable organisational efforts of the Southland branch, I am sure all NBA members will experience a very warm and friendly welcome later this month in the deep south. The airlines have also played their part by deciding to run special fare discounts throughout the conference period.

Delegates at the past few conferences have talked a lot about marketing, and no doubt this conference will be no exception. I have just finished reading the new "NBA Industry Marketing Plan (Honey Marketing Plan)" and I must say it is quite a document. On behalf of your executive I would like to express my thanks to the Marketing Committee and Bill Floyd for the amount of work they have put into developing this plan. For the plan to succeed, a strong

effort is also going to be required by all industry members working together, rather than acting as individuals.

An NBA committee representing exporters of bees and bee products recently met with senior officials of MAF's Regulatory Authority (RA) in Wellington. The Regulatory Authority is the arm of government which negotiates export protocols with other countries and contracts MAF Quality Management to perform export certification. Considerable sharing of ideas took place at that meeting, and we are now setting in motion several initiatives to hopefully solve some of the export issues facing our industry. I believe the collective NBA approach is the way to handle these matters. In fact, I was informed by RA representatives that they would much prefer to deal through the NBA, rather than with individual beekeepers. Members should take note of this request if they have any export-related problems. I am sure they will receive a better hearing if they work through their industry organisation.

I have decided to call a meeting the day after conference in Gore (Friday, July 23) to further discuss export certification issues. It seems to me that the three major issues currently facing us on this front are the overly stringent requirements for exports of bees to Korea, the problems with transshipment of bees through Hawaii, and the strong possibility that the European Community may impose area freedom requirements on all honey we export to member states (including the UK and Germany). Working together in these areas, and making a collective approach to the RA, I believe there is considerable potential for achieving desired results.

Tentative arrangements are also being made for Jim Edwards from the RA, Murray Reid from MAF Qual, and myself, representing the NBA, to travel to Korea in early July. An Australian delegation is due there at the end of July and we believe it is prudent to be there ahead of this group. The purpose of the visit is to overcome difficulties experienced there last season with bee import regulations and quarantine.

I look forward to meeting with many of you in Gore in July. The deep south is very hard to beat when it comes to hospitality, as I can testify, thanks to my stay on the Taieri Plains during the war. I did my elementary flying training there and will always remember how well we were received.

Dudley Ward, President

## BORDER RE-OPENING PROPOSED

This year's traumatic export shipping season for queens and package bees is over, but that hasn't stopped the sparks from flying, especially in the country which is still our major export market. Beekeepers in several areas of Canada, and in particular Alberta, have been lobbying for some time to re-open the border with the continental US to live bee shipments. The border was closed in 1987 in an effort to keep out parasitic mites. The Canadian beekeepers contend that it's just a matter of time until they get varroa, and that the costs associated with the current ban on imports of packages and queens from their traditional US suppliers are crippling their businesses. Far higher freight costs mean that package bees from NZ retail in Canada at up to two and a half times the price of packages being produced and sold in the US.

Now it seems that these Canadian beekeepers may have finally found the ear of the right people in their federal government. The most recent issue of the *Saskatchewan Beekeepers Association Newsletter* (Spring '93) includes a full reprint from the Canadian federal government official *Gazette* of a proposed revocation of the legislation closing the border (known as the Honey Bee Prohibition Regulations, 1991). The revocation, if it takes affect, would once again allow into Canada package bees and queens from such states as California, Georgia and Florida, provided 1) the cages which hold the queens/bees contain a miticide strip to kill the varroa, 2) the bees are certified as to the state of origin, and 3) the bees do not come from a state which has Africanised bees or is next to a state which has the bees. No mention is made of the AFB area freedom requirement which the Canadian federal authorities impose on New Zealand queen and package producers.

The good news, however, is that there is sure to be a fight over the proposal from beekeepers elsewhere in Canada. The *Gazette* notice gives interested parties 90 days to make submissions on the proposed change, and there is strong opposition to such a border re-opening from some segments of the industry. Beekeeping organisations in several provinces, including Saskatchewan and BC, are said to be opposed to the move, and the Canadian Honey Council and the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturalists (the 10 provincial governments' regulatory/advisory personnel) have recommended that the ban be continued. Nevertheless, it would appear that some commercial beekeepers with powerful political connections in Ottawa are exerting a large amount of influence over the affairs of the Canadian beekeeping industry.

## NEW MOVES OVER 1080

The beekeeping industry's fight to get a bee-safe bait for 1080 received a major publicity boost last week with an article in the widely distributed *Rural News* (June 21, 1993). The article, which begins with the sub-heading "New Zealand must have possum control... but the country cannot survive without bees", says that beekeepers who are continually being stung by the 1080 possum control programme want urgent action to stop bee poisonings.

The article reports on the case of Te Kuiti beekeeper and NBA member John Bassett, who has taken legal action for two successive years in attempts to halt the bee deaths. Last year, acting on behalf of 18 beekeepers in the area, he forced the Wanganui-Manawatu Regional Council and the Waikato Regional Council to use oxalic acid baits which are not attractive to bees (see *Buzzwords* 46).

This year a similar case against the Waikato Regional Council, scheduled for June 21, may be settled thanks to a recent meeting between beekeepers and representatives of the Animal Health Board (AHB) and MAF. Beekeepers contend it is the first time they have been given a direct hearing by the AHB over the issue. They have also taken a hard line approach. The article quotes NBA executive member Nick Wallingford as saying "we've been trying for three years to pressure the AHB to find a solution; it's their problem, not the beekeepers'."

However, AHB general manager Robert Isbister contends that in the three years since the board was formed it has been working hard trying to find a bee deterrent which doesn't also repel possums. The article says that the field trials using oxalic acid as a repellent, which followed promising initial work by Dr. Mark Goodwin from Ruakura, were not successful. So the board has now engaged Landcare to carry out a \$40,000 programme testing three new chemicals. Field trials are set to get under way this month.

The problem, according to the article, is that many people in our industry believe that the original oxalic acid trials were "botched". According to beekeepers, the original bait formulations were not used in the tests and regional council staff did not correctly carry out the field work. Mr. Isbister claims the trials were re-run with tighter parameters, but the





results were still too variable to be acceptable. It is likely, however, that future field trials may not use regional council staff.

The article makes it clear that our industry is not challenging the need for possum control and in fact supports possum reduction. It even quotes NBA member Neil Stuckey, from Auckland, as saying the possum poisoning campaign on Rangitoto Island was "the best thing that could have happened". The campaign actually helped to increase honey production on the island.

The article also mentions that the current system of beekeeper notification, which relies on MAF apiary register lists supplied as a courtesy to regional councils, is less than ideal. According to the article, NBA members Norm and Mary Dean, from Tauranga, are suing the Wanganui-Manawatu Regional Council for compensation because the council used an eight month old list which did not identify their hives as being in the area. As a result, council staff poisoned 120 of the Dean's hives in 1991 (see *Buzzwords* 43).

## JAPANESE MARKET POTENTIAL

This year Honeyland NZ Ltd, from Palmerston North, participated in Foodex Tokyo, a food fair which attracted over 86,000 people from throughout Japan. The fair provided a valuable opportunity for on-the-spot observations of potentials in the Japanese market place.

Markets in many parts of the world these days are characterised, at least to a certain extent, by the search for novelty. In the Japanese case, however, this search is much more pronounced. One could say it is almost an addiction - the Japanese are always looking for something new and special.

The Japanese public in general has a limited understanding of honey and its various floral sources. This is partly the result of Japanese marketing strategy, which presents honey in a very refined form. Colour, smell and flavour are all removed in an effort to cater for the traditional preference for subtle foods.

However, the food fair showed that there were many Japanese who were both surprised and delighted to discover the range and variety of New Zealand honeys. The fact that so many of these honeys are sourced from native trees, grown only in New Zealand, gave added excitement. It would seem that there is great potential in Japan for marketing speciality New Zealand honeys, each having its own quite distinctive taste, appearance and aroma.

There was also another potential which became obvious during Foodex, and this relates to the Japanese consumer's concern for purity. Many people who stopped to taste our honey products would question, in Japanese, "Is it pure honey?"

During the following week there was an article in the *Asahi* newspaper (March 17, 1993) which highlighted the apprehension Japanese housewives had about contamination in imported foods. A survey taken in that

country showed the following percentages of people concerned about various types of food contamination:

- 91.9% - residues of agricultural chemicals
- 60.6% - food additives
- 52.8% - antibiotic residues
- 41.1% - radioactivity pollution

Based on these figures, New Zealand honey obviously has great potential in the Japanese market. Our honey is guaranteed to be antibiotic-free by the New Zealand government, and of course the country is nuclear-free. No other country in the world can therefore make these claims for the purity of their honey. The Japanese already have a perception of New Zealand as a clean, green environment, and this perception could be further expanded in relation to our honey.

All honey imported to Japan from countries other than New Zealand has to be accompanied by a laboratory analysis certifying that the product contains no antibiotic residues. It was reported to me, however, that spot-checks carried out by Japanese government authorities have detected antibiotics in some non-New Zealand shipments. The shipments were all subsequently rejected by the Japanese.

Such cases have created doubt in the minds of both Japanese honey importers and consumers, and this is precisely the area of greatest potential for the New Zealand industry to exploit. It is for this reason that we need to ensure that there are quality checks all the way through our beekeeping industry. We are fortunate to have MAF Quality Management, with its international credibility, to guarantee export standards. But now quality standards need to be adopted at all levels of beekeeping. If we take this matter seriously, we could have a product that could be marketed as "second-to-none", at a price level which is also second-to-none.

Sue Walker, Honeyland NZ Ltd

## FROM THE BRANCHES

The next meeting of the **Hawkes Bay** branch will be on Monday, July 12, at 7.30 pm, at the Cruise Club, Lee Road, Taradale. This will be the remit voting meeting, so if you can't attend, make sure you send your proxy votes along.

Ron Morison, the Hawkes Bay branch secretary, has sent along his branch's comments regarding the remit calling for the elimination of American foulbrood. Ron says the branch does not think the idea of elimination is "pie-in-the-sky". The branch believes that if every beekeeper, hobbyist or commercial, conscientiously checked their hives each spring, we would already be well on our way to eradication. The branch also feels the industry should take advantage of the services being offered to test bees for AFB spores before infections become obvious to visual inspection.

The Waikato-Bay of Plenty beekeepers golf clash on June 16 was a great success, with fine weather and a good turnout of over 20 "golfers". Thanks go to **Waikato** branch secretary Tony Lorimer for organising the event. The **Bay of Plenty** branch won the competition, due no doubt in part to a par 35 round by David Moore, from Opoitiki (a real



#### HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

Applications for funding close on 15 August and 15 February. Forms available from PO Box 4048, Wgtn.

golfer). Longest putt of the day was made by Bryce Hooten, from Matamata. Bryce sank a 16 footer, which is all in a day's work for him, considering that despite his blindness he's also a very good beekeeper. "Giddy, Bryce!" (He gets *Buzzwords* on floppy disk and his computer "speaks" it back to him.)

## FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

Marketing Plan Information Bulletin - The NBA Industry Marketing Plan (Honey Marketing Plan) has now been received and accepted by the Marketing Committee and has been sent to executive for ratification at their July meeting. An information bulletin explaining the background to the plan, and giving an overview of the plan's objectives and strategies, was mailed to all NBA hive levy payers in June.

The Marketing Committee hopes that everyone will read this information bulletin thoroughly. As well, committee members will be attending as many branch remit meetings as possible to answer questions regarding the marketing plan and other marketing issues. The committee wishes to emphasize that the bulletin is only a summary of the plan. Branch secretaries can expect to receive a copy of the complete plan, containing much more detail, once it is ratified by executive.

Marketing Committee Operation Guidelines - Draft guidelines for the operation of the Marketing Committee have recently been drawn up by the NBA executive. The draft guidelines will be finalized with executive during conference. The activities of the Marketing Committee will be clearly identified within the NBA's annual set of accounts.

Marketing Committee Facilitator - The committee has decided to appoint Floyd Marketing Ltd as its facilitator. Floyd Marketing will be employed on an individual project basis, with each project having a separate contract. There has previously been some confusion within the industry concerning the contracting of Floyd Marketing's services on what was thought to be a total budget basis.

Bill Floyd has been involved with our industry since he gave his "Honey Sweeter than Wine" speech at the Blenheim conference seminar in 1991. Over the past two years he has worked closely with the Marketing Committee and has developed a wealth of knowledge about our industry and its products. He has also made contacts, particularly within the food industry, which will be of significant value to us in the future.

Marketing Plan Definitions - The universally accepted definition of "marketing" is "all of the processes by which a company (or industry group) identifies a consumer's wants or needs and conceptualises and effects their fulfilment". The Marketing Committee, seeking value for money, has added the word "profitably" to this definition.

There are four controllable dynamics that are addressed in the plan. These are 1) the product (or service) provided, or that which could be provided, 2) the pricing strategies for the product, 3) the placement of the product in the market place, and 4) the promotion of the product.

Performance Measurement - The Marketing Committee believes that the strategies developed in the marketing plan will bring about positive results in the long term for the industry. However, this term must be measured in years, not months. Limited successes may occur in a short period of time (eg., the manuka publicity), but these are likely to be the exception rather than the rule. They should also be seen as a complement to the plan's overall strategy, rather than being the plan's prime purpose.

The performance of the marketing plan must be judged against the total performance of the industry. These performance factors include:

- NZ's f.o.b. price for honey compared to the current international price
- Hive values in NZ compared to those in similar countries overseas
- Market share compared to other table spreads on the NZ market
- The first three factors compared to the total available crop in a given year
- The ease in selling existing beekeeping businesses compared to other similar-sized businesses in NZ

If the health of the industry is good, there will likely be an increased interest in beekeeping as a vocation and the sale value/turnover of hives and componentry will be an indication of the improved economic well-being of the industry as a whole.

Marketing Committee Future Activities - the committee's next meeting will be held in Gore during conference week. Allen McCaw, the committee chairperson, will give a 10 minute outline of the marketing plan at conference on behalf of the committee. This will be followed by a 10 minute presentation by Bill Floyd on the specifics of the plan. Bill will also be available during the conference to speak with NBA members.

- Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

## BUZZWORDS IS ...

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